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Hawai'i Department of Health examines specimens as possible Omicron cases

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health's State Laboratories Division (SLD) is performing whole genome sequencing on three COVID-19 specimens with molecular clues indicating they may be the Omicron variant.

"We remind everyone that wearing masks, avoiding large gatherings and getting vaccinated will keep them safe," said Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Char, FACEP.

"We can't yet say these specimens are Omicron cases, but we believe Omicron is already moving through the community. Our only confirmed Omicron case involves an individual with no known travel history. That leads us to believe it is a case of community transmission," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Kemble.

DOH advises anyone with COVID-19 symptoms to stay home and avoid contact with other people. Anyone with symptoms should get tested. Anyone who comes in contact with a known positive should get tested 5 to 7 days after exposure. Unvaccinated people who come in contact with a known positive should quarantine at home for ten days even if they have tested negative.

Additional information will be released when whole genome sequencing is complete.

Information on free testing and vaccines is available at <https://hawaiicovid19.com/>.

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